



UPDATE

Montana Department of Commerce

Dear Tourism Partners,

As the end of 2003 approaches, I pause to reflect on the past year. Montana's tourism industry has experienced a tumultuous year. In comparison to 2002, our state lodging tax collections were down 3% and 2% for the first and second quarter respectively. When reviewing regional collections for these same quarters, it's apparent that Custer Country and Yellowstone Country had the largest decreases. It's important to note however, that in 2002 these same tourism regions had substantial increases in collections ranging as high as 31% during the second quarter in Custer Country. We need to remember that in 2002 these regions were greatly impacted by the American Bowling Congress tournament. The winter season in 2002 was also blessed with early and good snow conditions, which was not the case in 2003.

Accommodations tax figures for the summer quarter will not be available until mid-December, too late for this monthly publication. When comparing the summer quarter this year to last, we should remember that in 2002 our neighboring states were combating fires, while Montana was experiencing a strong summer season. We were the benefactor of national travel trends created by the tragedy of 9-11 and the weakened economy. With fewer U.S. outbound trips, decreases in air travel and increased travel to safe and closer destinations, our third quarter statewide accommodations tax showed an increase of 6%.

Listed in Figure 1 are the 2003 summer visitation figures of our top three attractions—Yellowstone and Glacier National Parks and the Little Bighorn Battlefield. It is obvious that the fires in Glacier National Park had a tremendous impact on visitation figures within the park for July and August. What is remarkable is that Glacier National Park is indicating only a 6% decrease in total visitor numbers for the May through September season. It's been brought to my attention that firefighters are

included in these statistics. The recovery in September demonstrates that the strong public relations effort and "Autumn in Glacier Park" consumer marketing campaign have proven to be effective.

Figure 1	June	July	August	Sept.	May-Sept.
Yellowstone NP	+2.2%	+1.9%	+5.4%	-2.3%	+1.2%
Glacier NP	+37.4%	-2.3%	-43.2%	+11.5%	-6.1%
Little Bighorn Battlefield	+3.5%	-0.7%	+8.2%	+23.2%	+2.5%

We are receiving reports that lodging occupancy figures in the communities surrounding Glacier National Park are showing higher than normal occupancy figures. I commend the local representatives on their ability to relocate their guests within the area. However, I believe that we may see overall lower than average room rates as a result of the discounted rate provided to firefighters. An unknown is whether or not federal employees fighting the fire have qualified for an exemption from the 4% lodging facility use tax. This factor could greatly affect the tourism promotional efforts funded by this tax. I hope to be able to address some of these unknowns in next month's *Update*.

The challenges of the past year have once again demonstrated the strength and resiliency of the tourism and recreation industry in the state. We faced some difficult situations this past year, but as the saying goes "that which does not kill us makes us stronger." And stronger we are. Unprecedented cooperation among state and federal agencies as well as the public and private partnerships emerged from crisis situations, establishing relationships that will be long lasting. We're just beginning to see and understand the strength that comes from these associations. As your advocate for tourism, this is personally gratifying and exciting to see.

Wishing you a peaceful and joyful holiday season,

Did You Know?

- The November 7th issue of *USA Today* included Bridger Bowl in an "Off The Beaten Path" ski area feature.
- Both the November and December issues of *Cross Country Skier* highlight Montana, with articles including "Going to Camp" (West Yellowstone), "Skiing Glacier's Roads" and Yellowstone Expeditions backcountry/yurt excursions.
- Potosi Hot Springs is one of eight great getaways written up in the Nov./Dec. "Trips" section of *National Geographic Traveler*.
- *Home & Away* features "Glacier's Historic Hotels" plus other park activities in the November issue.
- Missoula is one of three special places highlighted in a "Going Home" feature in *Sunset's* November issue.
- Missoula is the subject of "Montana Medley," a full-length feature appearing in the December issue of *Trailer Life*.

Montana Promotion
Division Administrator



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"Play It Again, Montana" 30th Governor's Conference Theme

For three decades, Montana's tourism and recreation partners have been gathering for education, entertainment, networking and planning on how to keep the industry moving in a positive direction. 2004 will mark the 30th annual gathering of Montana's tourism team. To highlight this milestone, the get-together will be titled, "Play It Again, Montana: 30th Montana Governor's Conference on Tourism and Recreation."

Billings and the Holiday Inn Grand Montana will host the conference on Monday and Tuesday, April 5-6. Conference details will be available in January and will be posted on our Governor's Conference Website: www.travelmontana.state.mt.us/conference. If you are interested in being an exhibitor and/or sponsor, contact Sarah Lawlor, 406-841-2896, slawlor@state.mt.us.

Film Office Attends AFI FEST

The Montana Film Office recently cosponsored the American Film Institute's annual film festival AFI FEST in Los Angeles. The Film Office sponsors the event every year, teaming up with the Northern Plains and Rockies film commissions including Wyoming, South Dakota, and Idaho.

Film Office Manager Sten Iversen attended part of the ten-day festival, which has proven to be an excellent venue to meet independent filmmakers. "More and more, Montana is

becoming a location used by independent filmmakers, and attending AFI FEST is a great opportunity for us to touch base with these filmmakers and expose the opportunities Montana affords them," Iversen said.

There were over 44,000 people in attendance with a total of 137 films and 2,460 submissions in 2002 and numbers are growing—a 25 percent increase in submissions over 2001.

Feature Film Update

The independent feature film "Love Comes to the Executioner" wrapped up shooting in the Butte and Deer Lodge areas on November 15. The Montana Film Office was originally contacted in July to assist with locations and worked closely with film organizers finalizing production plans for the movie. Film liaison Connie Kenney of the Butte Chamber of Commerce was invaluable to the project offering much assistance to the crew.

Beginning October 19, the four-week shoot used the Old Prison in Deer Lodge. They also built sets in Butte warehouses and Butte locations including the Slaughter House. Throughout the production, offices were set up at the Butte Ramada Copper King Inn, which hosted the cast and crew.

SEGP Grant Deadline

Montana communities, nonprofit organizations and tribal governments sponsoring or planning annual special event projects are once again invited to apply for \$50,000 in state tourism "bed tax" grant funds available from the Montana Department of Commerce Special Events Grant Program (SEGP). The SEGP

application deadline is Friday, January 16, 2004. Contact: Carol Crockett, 406-841-2796, email: ccrockett@state.mt.us.

Welcome to the Team

Nancy Bond recently joined the Montana Promotion Division as the Industry Services Specialist. Nancy comes to us from Missoula where she recently completed her Master's Degree in Public Administration at the University of Montana. Prior to that, Nancy worked for over 11 years in nonprofit management in eastern and western Montana, most recently as Director of the Northwest Business Center in Kalispell.

*Alternative accessible formats of this document
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Calendar of Events

December

- 10 CTAP, Great Falls Civic Center
- 10-13 Montana Stockgrowers Convention, Billings
- 16 CTAP, Wibaux County Courtroom
- 17 CTAP, Crow Agency, Little Bighorn College

January

- 11-18 Vakantiebuurs-Utrecht Trade Show and Sales Calls, Amsterdam, Brussels and Luxembourg
- 15-25 Sundance Film Festival, Park City, UT

*For all of the latest Montana tourism
industry information log on to:
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Travel Montana • Montana Film Office
Montana Department of Commerce

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